

In the Claims:

Please amend the claims as set forth below without prejudice to Applicants' ability to file one or more continuation or divisional applications directed to the claims as originally filed.

1. (currently amended) A method of treating tissue within a patient, said method comprising the steps of:

providing at least one flexible instrument having a distal end; the instrument adapted to grasp or cut tissue;

providing at least one channel for accessing a treatment site;

extending at least a portion of the instrument from a distal end of the channel to access the treatment site, such that the distal end of the flexible instrument extends distally beyond the distal end of the channel;

constraining motion of the distal end of the instrument along a predetermined path at the treatment site while simultaneously restricting twisting of the flexible instrument about its longitudinal axis and permitting bending of the flexible instrument about an axis perpendicular to the longitudinal axis; and

grasping or cutting tissue with the instrument.

2. (canceled).

3. (canceled).

4. (currently amended) The method of Claim 1 wherein the step of permitting bending the instrument comprises bending the instrument through an angle of at least about 90 degrees.

5. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1 wherein the path is not parallel to a longitudinal axis of the channel.

6. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1 wherein the step of constraining motion of the end of the instrument comprises constraining motion of the end of the instrument along an arc.

7. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein the step of providing at least one channel comprises providing a channel having a proximal channel opening outside the patient and a distal channel opening within the patient.

8. (currently amended) The method of Claim 1 ~~wherein the step of constraining motion of the end of the instrument comprises~~ comprising bending the instrument to position the end of the instrument adjacent a lumen wall.
9. (original) The method of Claim 1 further comprising the step of cutting a tissue sample.
10. (original) The method of Claim 9 further comprising the step of removing the tissue sample through the channel without removing the instrument from the channel.
11. (original) The method of Claim 1 further comprising the step of ablating tissue.
12. (original) The method of Claim 1 further comprising the step of treating the tissue with argon plasma.
13. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein the first instrument comprises a hollow member, and wherein the method further comprises communicating a source of vacuum with the hollow member.
14. (currently amended) A method of treating tissue within a patient, said method comprising the steps of:
providing a first flexible instrument having a distal end, wherein the first instrument is adapted to cut or grasp tissue;
providing a second flexible instrument having a distal end;
providing a first channel for accessing a treatment site;
providing a second channel for accessing a treatment site;
advancing the first instrument from a distal end of the first channel to a treatment site within the patient while simultaneously restricting twisting of the flexible instrument about its longitudinal axis and permitting bending of the flexible instrument about an axis perpendicular to the longitudinal axis;
advancing the second instrument from a distal end of the second channel to the treatment site;
and
cooperating motion of the distal ends of the first and second instruments such that the distal ends follow a predetermined path.

15. (currently amended) The method of Claim 14 wherein the step of cooperating motion of the distal ends of the first and second instruments comprises engaging the distal ends of the first and second instruments, one with the other, such that the distal ends of the first and second instruments translate together and the distal ends of the first and second instruments can rotate relative to one another.

16. (canceled).

17. (canceled) .

18. (original) The method of Claim 14 wherein the step of cooperating motion of the distal ends of the first and second instruments comprises bending at least one of the first and second instrument through an angle of at least about 90 degrees.

19. (original) The method of Claim 18 wherein the step of cooperating motion of the distal ends of the first and second instruments comprises bending at least one of the first and second instruments through an angle of at least about 180 degrees.

20. (previously amended) A method of treating tissue within a patient, said method comprising the steps of:

providing an endoscope having at least one instrument channel;

disposing the endoscope in a body lumen;

advancing a flexible instrument adapted for grasping or cutting tissue from the distal end of the instrument channel to access a treatment site in the body lumen;

constraining motion of the distal end of the flexible instrument along a desired path distally of the distal end of the instrument channel as the instrument is advanced from the distal end of the instrument channel while simultaneously restricting twisting of the flexible instrument about its longitudinal axis and permitting bending of the flexible instrument about an axis perpendicular to the longitudinal axis; and

cutting or grasping tissue with the flexible instrument.

21. (canceled).

22. (original) The method of Claim 20 wherein the step of bending the instrument comprises bending the instrument through an angle of at least about 90 degrees.

23. (original) The method of Claim 22 wherein the step of bending the instrument comprises bending the instrument through an angle of at least about 180 degrees.

24. (Canceled)

25. (original) The method of Claim 20 wherein the step of constraining motion of the end of the instrument comprises constraining motion of the end of the instrument along an arc.

26. (canceled).

27. (currently amended) The method of Claim 20 wherein the method comprises engaging tissue with at least one jaw disposed at the distal end of the instrument, ~~and wherein the method comprises restricting twisting of the distal end of the instrument as the instrument is advanced along the desired path.~~

28. (canceled)

29. (previously amended) A method of treating tissue within a patient, said method comprising:

disposing a relatively rigid member for guiding motion of a medical instrument to at the distal end of an endoscope;

inserting a first relatively flexible instrument having a distal end through an instrument channel of said endoscope;

connecting the relatively flexible instrument to the relatively rigid member;

inserting the relatively rigid member and the relatively flexible instrument into the patient; and

constraining motion of the distal end of the relatively flexible instrument with the relatively rigid member without substantial bending of the relatively rigid member; wherein motion of the distal end of the relatively flexible instrument is constrained along a desired path as the relatively flexible instrument is advanced from the distal end of the instrument channel.

30. (previously amended) The method of Claim 29 comprising supporting the relatively rigid member for rotation about an axis fixed with respect to the distal end of the endoscope.